REMARKS

Amended claim 1 corresponds to original claim 1 with the last sentence of paragraph 18 of the specification as published incorporated therein. Said sentence reads: "The system is scalable to the growth in subscriber lines within the MDF by installing additional cross-connection boards as necessary to meet the need."

Amended claim 13 corresponds to original claim 13 with the features of original claim 18 incorporated therein. Claim 18 has been deleted.

Amended claim 1 now defines that the automated cross-connect system comprises modular cross-connect boards, that the modular cross-connect boards are coupled to connector blocks in a scalable manner, and that the system is scalable to a growth in subscriber lines within the MDF by installing additional cross-connection boards as necessary to meet the need.

Thus, the automated cross-connect system of claim 1 is able to fulfil requirements for cost-effectiveness and scalability as required by telecom service providers.

Hard does not provide a modular system which is scalable by installing additional cross-connection boards. Goodrich discloses switching relay module means plugged into a backplane, which means that the space available on said backplane limits the scalability. Thus, neither Hard nor Goodrich provide a system which is scalable to a growth in subscriber lines within the MDF by installing additional cross-connection boards as necessary to meet the need.

Consequently, the invention according to claim 1 is novel.

As has been described, neither Hard nor Goodrich disclose automated cross-connect systems that are scalable to a growth in subscriber lines within the MDF by installing additional cross-connection boards as necessary to meet the need. The advantages of the invention according to claim 1 have been described above, and also in the application as filed. It is not clear how the systems of Hard and Goodrich could be redesigned to provide for scalability as does the claimed invention. Therefore it is respectfully submitted that the invention according to claim 1 is not obvious to a skilled person.

Amended claim 13 defines a method of automating cross-connects using a scalable automated cross-connect system, where said system is scalable to a growth in subscriber lines within the MDF by coupling further modular cross-connection boards to available connector blocks.

The advantages achieved by the method according to claim 13 are described above with reference to claim 1. Thus it is submitted that the invention according to claim 13 is novel and, for the same reasons as above, not obvious to a skilled person.

No additional fees are believed to be due at this time beyond the fee for one month extension of time. However if necessary to effect a timely response the Commissioner is authorised to deduct the necessary fees from Deposit account No. 501249.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date: 12 March 2012